

**Questions and Answers about *Fast Forward*,
Indiana's Race to the Top Plan
Updated 2/11/2010**

General RttT questions

Will the PowerPoint and audio from the 1/20/10 WebEx be posted online?

The WebEx will not be posted online, but the PowerPoint and audio are available at this link: <http://media.doe.in.gov/WebEx/tbennett/2010-01-20-Racetothetop/index.html>.

On the last slide of the WebEx, it says "Identify lowest 25% of schools." Should this say "Identify lowest 5% of schools" or "Identify lowest 25% of students?"

The slide should say both "Identify lowest 25% of students" and "Identify lowest 5% of schools."

Does the association president's signature void the collective bargaining law?

No.

What can administrators do to prepare for RttT reforms?

Administrators can read Indiana's *Fast Forward* plan and start identifying ways to implement the reforms. In the event Indiana wins an award under RttT, IDOE will provide a sample work plan each LEA may use to develop its final work plan.

Did the Indiana Federation of Teachers and/or Indiana State Teachers' Association sign the Fast Forward application for the state of Indiana?

No. The only signatures required on the application were the Governor's, Dr. Bennett's and the Attorney General's.

If Indiana is successful in its RttT proposal, will IDOE continue with the educational reforms within the plan?

Yes. *Fast Forward* is Indiana's plan to implement Race to the Top reforms.

How many states will receive funding from RttT?

The United States Department of Education has not indicated how many states will win.

Is there a penalty for opting out after the work plan has been finalized?

In the event Indiana wins a RttT award, IDOE will provide a sample work plan. The sample plan will address any penalties for termination.

Will more administrators be hired under RttT to allow for the implementation of full annual evaluations?

No.

How much local control will individual school districts have regarding hiring, curriculum, staff and professional development? How much local control will be ceded to federal and state government?

Control will remain essentially the same. Through *Fast Forward*, though, IDOE will be able to provide extensive tools, like professional development, that LEAs will be able to utilize to implement the reforms.

How much control will districts have over number of days per school year and number of hours in the school day?

A district will have the same flexibility it has now, once it meets the minimum days and hours required by state law.

What are the considerations for special education?

Neither the RttT application nor Indiana's *Fast Forward* plan directly addresses special education.

Will state statutes change if they are in conflict with RttT, or will there be changes in the federal law that override state law and collective bargaining agreements?

Most reforms contained in *Fast Forward* can be made without any statutory changes. Where a change in statute or administrative rule would be necessary to accomplish reform, that fact has been noted in the *Fast Forward* plan.

Who will be building the data systems and will corporations be funded to upgrade their technology separately from the RttT funds or is that one area the RttT will fund?

IDOE will build or contract for the building of data systems. Participating LEAs will be able to use RttT funding for technology upgrades consistent with *Fast Forward*.

How will the community be involved in the RttT reforms?

LEAs will have the flexibility to involve members of the community in any way they see fit.

How will the selection of textbooks be affected by the standards/testing being created for subjects such as foreign languages?

This is not addressed directly in the *Fast Forward* plan.

How soon does IDOE expect to see the RttT mandates and areas of focus becoming a requirement for all schools whether they participate in RttT or not?

IDOE has not been provided any specific information on this topic, but the President indicated in his State of the Union address that the federal government intends to pursue ESEA reauthorization that is based on the reform criteria in RttT.

Does an LEA currently implementing reforms stated in Fast Forward (i.e. teacher evaluations, turnaround models) need to stop the current reforms or change them in order to meet RttT qualifications?

Where reforms are currently being implemented, IDOE will work with the participating LEA during the work plan stage to integrate those reforms with *Fast Forward*.

Work Plan

What happens if the teachers' association did not sign onto the MOU?

Participating LEAs will have another opportunity to secure an association signature during the work plan phase (after the U.S. Department of Education announces awards). The LEA will need the signature of the local teachers' association leader (in addition to the LEA superintendent and the local school board president) on the work plan in order to participate in RttT. If and LEA is unable to secure all three signatures (two for charters), it will not be able to participate in *Fast Forward*.

May the district enlist the help of the association in the development of the work plan if the association did not sign the MOU?

Yes, and the association's signature will be required on the work plan in order for the LEA to participate.

How does the IDOE plan to handle opposition from teachers' associations?

IDOE has been working closely with the teachers' associations and looks forward to continuing to partner with them on a successful implementation of RttT reforms.

Will the work plan need the LEA's full school board approval?

Similar to the Partnership Agreement, the LEA will need the signature of the local school board president (in addition to the LEA superintendent and the local teachers' association leader) on the work plan in order to participate in RttT.

Where can we find the specific criteria required for the work plan? Will a template be provided? When will LEA work plan guidelines be issued, and when will the work plan be used?

RttT awards will be announced in April 2010. If Indiana is awarded funds, IDOE will produce a sample work plan as soon as possible after the announcement. IDOE is in the process of developing a framework which will assist LEAs in drafting work plans. IDOE does not yet know the deadline when work plans will be due, as the timeline will be determined by the date of the RttT award.

Will funding be available for development of the work plan or only for implementation?

Because an LEA will not be considered a Participating LEA until a work plan has been completed and approved by IDOE, funding will only be available for implementation. IDOE plans to assist LEAs as much as possible through the provision of a work plan framework; this should alleviate any funding concerns with regard to work plan development.

Should the LEA wait until the sample work plan is available to begin working on it?

This is a decision for each LEA, but IDOE will provide significant assistance in this area. Should you determine it best to wait for IDOE's framework, it would still be advisable to familiarize yourself with the *Fast Forward* plan.

Funding

What is the new allocation of the Title I portion of RttT?

The distribution of half of any Race to the Top award, based on relative shares of Title I funding, can be found at www.doe.in.gov/fastforward.

Why are there decreases in the current Title I amount from the amounts released in December?

In creating the December list of distributions based on Title I shares, IDOE calculated shares based solely on regular Title I distributions. After reading further guidance from the USDOE, IDOE calculated the new list based on regular distributions plus stimulus funding. This new calculation resulted in a higher percentage of the total for some LEAs and a lower percentage for others.

What is the effect of RttT on Title I funding?

Currently, Race to the Top does not affect Title I funding.

When Title I is reauthorized this year, will it mirror RttT?

President Obama has implied Title I reauthorization will mirror RttT.

Is the Title I distribution determined by the normal Title I formula or the formula provided in the Stimulus package?

It is determined by regular Title I distribution plus stimulus distribution.

How will discretionary portion of RttT funds be dispersed?

A detailed budget is provided in the *Fast Forward* Appendix, available at www.doe.in.gov/fastforward.

If an LEA signs up for RttT and does not receive any funds, is it still bound to RttT reform measures?

Some portions of the State's plan will apply to all LEAs (such as professional development offerings, etc.), and others will only apply to Participating LEAs. (Please refer to the *Fast Forward* plan for specific details.) However, President Obama indicated in his State of the Union address his plans to mirror RttT reforms in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. To that end, LEAs should anticipate moving toward these reforms at some point in the future as directed by federal law.

Will IDOE provide a cost estimate for schools to receive common core assessments and a cost estimate for schools to receive the technology needed for on-line common core assessments?

Beginning on page 81 in the *Fast Forward* Appendix is a table outlining the associated budget for transition to common assessments. The link to the appendix is http://www.doe.in.gov/fastforward/docs/indianas_fast_forward_plan_appendix.pdf.

Of the \$500 million, will schools only get roughly \$20 million of it?

No. One-half of any RttT award to Indiana will go directly to Participating LEAs based on relative shares of Title I. There is some confusion around a roughly \$20 million figure referenced in the *Fast Forward* budget. This is an amount, above and beyond that one-half distribution, that will go to LEAs. Details are provided in the full budget document.

If funds will be distributed through Title I, does that limit the uses of the funds to Title I schools only? And, does that limit the reform to only Title I schools?

Half of the RttT award will be distributed to LEAs based on their relative shares of Title I. Use of these dollars is not restricted to Title I activities but must be in accordance with *Fast Forward*. The remaining RttT funds are designated for statewide reform initiatives, so each Participating LEA will benefit from this funding.

Will the 50% over which the IDOE has control be awarded on a first-come/first-served basis, or will there be an application window?

The funds will not be distributed on a first-come/first-served basis, but there will be a deadline by which each LEA must submit its work plan (IDOE will provide a framework) to implement RttT reforms in compliance with the *Fast Forward* plan.

Will this be like Title I funds where the LEA will share the funds with the local private and parochial schools?

No.

Is this one time money?

Yes. Race to the Top is a one-time grant to support education reform over the next four years, or as soon as the money is spent.

If we create a successful work plan, when will the local district receive the money for the work plan?

The IDOE will not know the distribution schedule until after the award is announced in April 2010.

Because this is federal money, will the supplement versus supplant rule apply?

No. Relative share of Title I is merely the basis for distribution. The accounting, reporting, and program requirements will be identified in the work plan and final agreement between IDOE and each LEA.

Will schools receiving RttT funds based on Title I shares have to implement all the aspects of the Fast Forward Plan to receive the funding?

Yes. Each participating LEA must produce a work plan (IDOE will provide a framework) to implement RttT reforms in compliance with the *Fast Forward* plan. IDOE will work with each participating LEA to determine whether any *Fast Forward* elements (e.g. turnaround) are inapplicable to the LEA.

Details of the application

Section B: Standards and Assessments

What does the growth model look like, must it include ISTEP+, and is there a website with information discussing the growth model?

The early phase of the growth model can be viewed on the Learning Connection. For information on the Learning Connection, please visit <https://learningconnection.doe.in.gov/Login.aspx?ret=/default.aspx>.

When will final standards be released?

The final Common Core standards are scheduled to be released at the end of February 2010.

Can districts implement higher standards than the national core standards?

States must adopt and use the Common Core as 85% of state standards. Districts may certainly implement more rigorous standards.

Section C: Data Systems to Support Instruction

Data systems will send confidential student data. Is this allowed under FERPA?

The IDOE will develop data systems to comply with FERPA and all other applicable laws.

Who will pay for the purchase and maintenance of the software needed to implement this system?

Participating LEAs will receive funding for implementation of *Fast Forward*.

Will the longitudinal data system be a single system?

The entire longitudinal data system will rely on vertical interoperability between and among the IDOE system and local systems.

Section D: Great Teachers and Leaders

Will the state mandate the evaluation tool for teachers?

For a detailed description of the plans for teacher and principal evaluation, please refer to Section D of Indiana's *Fast Forward* application. The application is available at <http://www.doe.in.gov/fastforward>.

What is IDOE's definition of effective teachers and will this definition consider certain components of curriculum and/or teaching styles?

For a detailed description of the plans for teacher and principal evaluation, please refer to Section D of Indiana's *Fast Forward* application. The application is available at <http://www.doe.in.gov/fastforward>.

Will principals' pay be based on how well teachers do their jobs and will superintendents' pay be based on how well each principal does his/her job?

For a detailed description of the plans for teacher and principal evaluation, please refer to Section D of Indiana's *Fast Forward* application. The application is available at <http://www.doe.in.gov/fastforward>. In addition to information about an evaluation framework, the application provides a chart listing possible compensation levels.

How will teachers in subjects and grade levels be evaluated if their subjects/grade levels do not have standardized tests?

For a detailed description of the plans for teacher and principal evaluation, please refer to Section D of Indiana's *Fast Forward* application. The application is available at <http://www.doe.in.gov/fastforward>.

What are the incentives teachers will be provided?

This is something that can be addressed during the work plan phase.

If an LEA reaches agreement on a new evaluation plan or merit pay system, will it be approved by IDOE?

Yes, as long as it fits within the framework established within Indiana's RttT application.

What student data would be used for non-core teacher evaluations to meet the 51% requirement?

IDOE endeavors to establish a program to accurately evaluate and regard effective teachers and school leaders through a comprehensive data-driven performance management system. These questions will be addressed in detail as we work with teachers and principals to establish this system.

Will IDOE establish pre and post testing for all courses taught in Indiana schools?

The next phases of the growth model are in development now, and these questions will be addressed during the development.

Is there any added value to our State application by implementing a state-wide teacher/principal evaluation?

Yes. The Great Teachers and Leaders section of the RttT application is worth 28%, and as such represents the single greatest portion of the possible points a state can receive in the scoring rubric. The USDOE clearly states evidence of student learning must be significant criterion for teacher/leader effectiveness and must be a key consideration for evaluation of teachers and leaders.

May local and/or formative assessments be included in the 51% of the evaluation that must be based on student growth?

Yes, if the assessment meets the criteria of the RttT application.

Section E: Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

How was the bottom 5% determined?

Schools that have remained in the lowest category of PL 221 rankings for four consecutive years (i.e. schools subject to visits by state turnaround teams) were automatically included. High schools with a three-year, non-waiver graduation rate of less than 60% were also automatically included. The remainder were included via a combination of three factors: 1) A three-year average of the percentage of students passing the Graduation Qualifying Examination; 2) A three-year average of a school's non-waiver graduation rate; 3) The combined percentage passing rate of students on the ELA and math ISTEP (i.e. 200 percentage points possible).

What is the correlation between the bottom 5% list and RttT funds?

If a state is awarded a RttT grant, some funds may be directed to the lowest achieving schools.

Will districts be at liberty to choose the turnaround model appropriate for their situation or will it be determined by IDOE?

IDOE will work with struggling schools to implement one of the four intervention models outlined by the USDOE.

Can a school be added to the bottom 5% list, and how often will the list be updated?

The list may be revisited when new data becomes available.

If a LEA does not participate in RttT, but has a school in the bottom 5%, will it indirectly receive RttT funds?

All LEAs, regardless of whether they participate or not, will benefit from aspects of *Fast Forward*.

Will schools on the bottom 5% list not participating in RttT be required to choose one of the turnaround models set forth in Fast Forward?

Implementation of one of the four intervention models is not strictly dependent on participation in *Fast Forward*.